

### **Opposition to an academic boycott of Israel**

*Proposed by: Benjamin Harris, DPEW*

*Seconded by: John Collins, President*

#### **This Union notes:**

1. That the University and Colleges Union (UCU) passed policy at their annual Congress which called for a discussion in all branches regarding an academic boycott of Israel. (Appendix A)
2. That the Imperial College representative at UCU Congress voted against this motion (as mandated).
3. That the UCU General Secretary, Sally Hunt, has publicly stated: *"I do not believe a boycott is supported by a majority of [120,000] UCU members, nor do I believe that members see it as a priority for the union."*
4. That the Russell Group of universities, of which Imperial College is a member, has rejected outright any call for a boycott.
5. That Nobel Prize winner Prof. Steven Weinberg recently cancelled a planned visit to Imperial College citing a decision by the National Union of Journalists to boycott Israeli products as his reason.
6. Prof. Weinberg further stated: *"I know that some will say that these boycotts are directed only against Israel, rather than generally against Jews. But given the history of the attacks on Israel and the oppressiveness and aggressiveness of other countries in the Middle East and elsewhere, boycotting Israel indicated a moral blindness for which it is hard to find any explanation other than anti-Semitism."*

#### **This Union believes:**

1. That academic freedom is central to the continuing existence of any University.
2. That targeting an individual nation in this way runs counter to mission of universities in promoting and nurturing debate, enquiry and co-operation.
3. That many Israeli academics are sympathetic to the plight of Palestinians, and a boycott of their work is completely counter-intuitive.

#### **This Union resolves:**

1. To condemn the UCU for passing such a policy at its Congress.
2. To oppose in the strongest possible terms any move toward such a boycott by any member of staff at Imperial College.
3. To mandate the Union President to write to Prof. Weinberg outlining this Union's opposition to any boycott of Israeli universities and attaching this policy.

**Appendix A**

**In3 Composite: Boycott of Israeli Academic Institutions (University of Brighton, Grand Parade; University of East London, Docklands)**

Congress notes that Israel's 40-year occupation has seriously damaged the fabric of Palestinian society through annexation, illegal settlement, collective punishment and restriction of movement.

Congress deplores the denial of educational rights for Palestinians by invasions, closures, checkpoints, curfews, and shootings and arrests of teachers, lecturers and students.

Congress condemns the complicity of Israeli academia in the occupation, which has provoked a call from Palestinian trade unions for a comprehensive and consistent international boycott of all Israeli academic institutions.

Congress believes that in these circumstances passivity or neutrality is unacceptable and criticism of Israel cannot be construed as anti-Semitic.

Congress instructs the NEC to

- circulate the full text of the Palestinian boycott call to all branches/LAs for information and discussion;
- encourage members to consider the moral implications of existing and proposed links with Israeli academic institutions;
- organise a UK-wide campus tour for Palestinian academic/educational trade unionists;
- issue guidance to members on appropriate forms of action.